ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview by Computer Test (OPIc) Frequently Asked Questions

For University of Michigan World Languages Teacher Certification Students

1. What is the OPIc?
   The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview by Computer (OPIc) is a testing method that determines your oral proficiency in a language based on criteria outlined in the Speaking section of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines:

2. When should I take the test?
   World languages teacher certification students are required to pass the OPIc in their teaching major and/or teaching minor before they can be recommended for certification.

   The test is ideally taken during the second semester of the teacher education program. If you fail the test the first time you may retest immediately; however, if you fail the test a second time you must wait 90 days before retesting. You want to take the test early on so that you leave yourself enough time to retake the test if necessary.

3. When is the test offered?
   Generally, the test will be offered on the second Tuesday of each month at 9:00 a.m. at the University of Michigan’s Language Resource Center. The only months we do not offer tests are July and August. Please, however, check the School of Education OPIc website frequently for any changes to this schedule:
   [http://www.soe.umich.edu/file/opic/](http://www.soe.umich.edu/file/opic/)

4. How do I schedule a test date?
   To schedule an OPIc test date, you will need to create an account on the LTI website:
   For detailed instructions about how to schedule your test date, please refer to the School of Education website:
   [http://www.soe.umich.edu/file/opic/](http://www.soe.umich.edu/file/opic/)

   **You must RSVP to your test and reserve a seat in the classroom.** If you do not RSVP, we cannot guarantee you will begin your test at 9:00 a.m., or be able to take it on your preferred test day.

   You will have to log in with your Kerberos password when you RSVP. Use this link to RSVP:
   [https://sitemaker.umich.edu/opic/rsvp](https://sitemaker.umich.edu/opic/rsvp)

5. Can I re-take the test?
   You may retake the test. After the first attempt, you may retest immediately; however, if you fail to achieve the required rating a second time you must wait 90 days before retesting. You want to start this process so that you leave yourself enough time to retake the test if necessary. You are required to pay the fee each time that you take the test.

6. How can I best prepare to take the OPIc?
   It is helpful to read the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines in order to be familiar with the functions, discourse length, and accuracy features of the level that you need to achieve. You can find these guidelines at:
http://actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org/

You may want to prepare for the exam by listening to the news on the radio or on TV; reading newspapers online; watching things like soap operas on the web; and, generally immersing yourself in the daily use of the language.

It is helpful to read the ILR Language Skill Level Descriptions – Speaking: http://fam.actfittesting.org/ILRDescriptors.aspx in order to be familiar with the communication tasks, discourse length and accuracy features of the level that you need to demonstrate. Practice as much as you can the tasks that you will need to demonstrate during the test, i.e., having short conversations, asking questions, recounting experiences, giving full descriptions, stating and supporting opinions, etc. Review the ILR OPIc Familiarization and OPIc Demo before taking the OPIc test.

Visit the School of Education website for test preparation resources and Dr. Coolican’s test preparation advice: http://www.soe.umich.edu/file/opic/

7. How is the OPIc structured?
The test-taker is given 15-20 prompts at various levels of difficulty based on your selections from a Background Survey, and your Self Assessment based on Can Do statements. Visit the OPIc Familiarization Site for information about your Self Assessment and Background Survey details: http://fam.actfittesting.org/SelfAssessment.aspx

The OPIc contains varying time limits for each prompt. For more difficult prompts, you will have more time to respond. There are often several questions in each prompt to give you some ideas about things to talk about and suggestions about details to provide. If you do not fully remember every question contained in a prompt, simply address the primary question to the best of your ability.

The first question in all interviews is: Let’s start the interview now. Tell me something about yourself. This question functions as a warm up, an opportunity for the speaker to begin using the language.

8. Who administers the OPIc test?
A proctor will be present in the room to monitor your technology needs, but you will be tested by an on-screen Avatar. The Avatar is a Digital Tester who guides the test taker through the OPIc. The Avatar asks questions in the target language and the test taker then responds. The responses are digitally recorded, uploaded via the internet, and submitted for rating.

View an OPIc Demo Movie: http://fam.actfittesting.org/OPIcMovie.aspx

9. How long is the test?
The OPIc itself is not a timed exam, but the response time for each question is timed, with the allowed amount of time varying depending on the difficulty level of the prompt. The test averages about 40-60 minutes.

10. What is contained in each prompt?
Each prompt gives you a topic and a speaking task to perform. Because the OPIc is a measure of interpersonal speaking ability, the prompts are presented in a conversational format. Each prompt is specifically structured to elicit a speaking task for a level of the ILR Scale from 0+ through 2. To learn more, please review the ILR OPIc
Familiarization: http://fam.actfittesting.org/ILRDescriptors.aspx

11. **What are the best strategies for success on the OPIc?**
   When taking the OPIc, listen to the prompts carefully and address all the specific tasks in each prompt. This is an oral proficiency test, so we are not measuring the accuracy of your responses, but rather how you communicate them.

12. **What if I am asked a question that I do not know much about?**
   If you are asked a question that you are unfamiliar with, simply talk about how you are unfamiliar with the question and perhaps why you are unfamiliar with it. Again, this is a proficiency test so we are only measuring your abilities to communicate in the target language.

   It is important that you should participate as fully as you can; giving short answers to avoid making mistakes is not recommended. If the tester introduces a topic that you do not want to discuss, you should say so. If this happens, you may need to suggest alternative topics that you’re willing to discuss. Once again, you should be an active participant in the interview. The tester is only evaluating you on how well you speak the standard form of the language, not your actual opinions; the content of your answers, responses or opinions, does not affect your final rating.

13. **What if I do not fully remember every question contained in a prompt?**
   Address the question to the best of your ability. There are often several questions in each prompt to encourage you to provide as much detail as possible in your responses. If you do not remember all of the questions, simply add as much detail as possible.

14. **Can I use reference materials during the test?**
   You may use a blank sheet of paper and a pen to write notes during your test.